Informant: LMP-S6 **Language: Spanish**
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Interviewer: Claudia Hernandez
Revised by Maribel Lopez on 02-15-02

CH: Ok. Then, we can begin when I finish putting this in here.

S6: Can we begin?

CH: Oh, no.

S6: I was just asking.

CH: Do you have the list? You told me that you were going to outline-

S6: Manga, hand me the paper where the questions are. Please.

CH: Because I also brought a list. But I can begin when you say so.

S6: A copy of the paper.

(Audio Interference)

S6: Did I bring the typical lion from El Salvador or Guatemala[1]?

CH: Guatemala.

S6: Look. Because it was bad, right?

CH: Yes. From the ones that are still left.

S6: Oh, there are very few left.

CH: Really? I want to see. Could you put it over here? I think that it's better if I put it at your feet. I hope that it reaches.

S6: I could tell you what botánicas were present and why I think that they are gone.

CH: Ok. I just always ask this to see if you know if there were or if there weren't any when you got here.

S6: There were a lot here.
CH: Right?

S6: I have been in this area for ten years, but it was full back then.

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[1] Unsure of what was actually said.

CH: Oh, yes? Ok. I will put checks on you what say is ‘yes’ and ‘no’.

S6: Like this one, this one no…Oh, you ask me because I forgot.

CH: Ok. Tell me ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

S6: Ok.

CH: Then (how I explained to you), to know about the Latin community I always ask if you know about botánicas, but there are so many. For example, if you know about one being the oldest. Like that pharmacy that is called ‘Botica del Pueblo,’ I thought that it was a botanica. But-

S6: ‘The Botica del Pueblo’ is approximately thirty-five years old.

CH: Thirty-five years being in the same-

S6: In the same location. But that is with a doctor’s prescription.

CH: They don’t sell herbal medicines or stuff like that?

S6: They also have herbs, medicinal herbs, but they require a recipe that is given by the doctor, a naturalist.

CH: Ok. Are there any other old botánicas?

S6: The others that I knew--there was one that was called ‘Niña Religion.’

CH: ‘Niña Religion.’

S6: It was here on the 7th, but then they moved it and went to Pico and Vermont.

CH: Oh, they changed location.

S6: It was there for 21 years.

CH: Where? On 7th?

S6: Yes. Since there was a lot of competition from a lot botánicas, they decided to find a better area for more business and sales.

CH: To have their own clients? Ok. Have you seen botánicas that set up and that perhaps haven’t had good business and have gone out of business very quickly?

S6: For example, there was one that was called ‘The Peruvian’ (La Peruana). It was a peruana that was two blocks from here. It lasted like eight months. On the other side by 7th and Westlake, there was another one called ‘The Oaxacan’ (La Oaxaquena). They also took this one down-I don’t know for what reason-but they lasted like one or two years. There was also another one near Valencia.

CH: Valencia.

S6: Valencia and 7th. They also took that one down. It was one called 'Divine Light' (Luz Divina).

CH: 'Divine Light.'

S6: It was called 'The Botanica Luz Divina.' They also took that one down. There was one near here that was taken down that was called 'The Savior of the World' (El Salvador del Mundo). Also, near 6th: Now, there is another owner. It's another person. They change owners, take them down, or someone else puts it up in the same area.

CH: Yes. I spoke to a man that worked for 'Botanica Central America' (Botanica Centro America) and now it's 'Savior of the World.' But when you drive by, you don't see the name. So, I don't know if its name is still 'Botanica,' but it's still a botanica.

S6: It's still a botanica, but now it changed into the hands of another owner.

CH: Yes.

S6: For example, these people sometimes just sell to make money. Then, when they have made money and the work that they are doing doesn't come out right, they decide to sell to another person. Then, their hands are washed and there are no more problems. For them, obviously. For people with losses, they obviously have problems.

CH: Yes. Exactly. How do you think that the race of the population here has changed? Has there always been Latinos since the time that you came?

S6: I have been at this area for ten years and since I came, there were a lot of Latinos. For example, my mother said that before (like twenty or twenty-four years since she has been living here) these areas were completely filled with Americans. There were no botánicas or any of that. There were only American brand name stores. Now, she tells me that it's almost one hundred percent Latino.

CH: Yes. There are a lot of us. I have questions regarding your botanica, addressing its history, religion, products and services. When did you establish your botanica here?

S6: I established it at this location in 1997, almost at the end of 1997. Previously, I had another botanica in the area of San Fernando, on Norway and Sepulveda.

CH: I lived around there.

S6: Then, I had another botanica. I have been in this business for ten years. I set up this botanica at this area like four years ago. Understand that there are more people, more Latinos. There are more Latinos over there, but they don't like to visit places that sell herbs or curanderos. There are more people in this area that look for a place where people can tell them about their luck, where they can give them a tea, an herb. Then, there is more commerce over here than over there and that is the reason why I moved over here. The other place is still there, but my aunt is in charge.

CH: Oh. What is the name of that botanica?

S6: The botanica is called XXXXXX. The same.

CH: The same as this place? XXXXXXXX. So, your aunt takes care of the place?

S6: She is the administrator.

CH: But is it still your business?

S6: No. It has passed on to her hands because I preferred moving here. Then, I dedicated myself to opening a spiritual center in the middle of Isalco in El Salvador.

CH: Have you done it yet?

S6: Yes, that one yes. It's open now. It has been open since 1992.

CH: Really? I went to Isalco looking for a woman who was a curandera. It was an old woman that they told me about.

S6: The woman that I administrate with is my grandmother. Her name is Rosa. She is the one dedicated to curing over there. However, it is very different curing over there because people cut the herbs from the fields. They don't buy them like over here.

CH: Yes. Exactly.

S6: With any kind of leaf they make a plaster for a wound, or inflammation. On the other hand, when one has a wound over here it is better to go to the doctor.

CH: Even though it's easy, costs more and one can do it by themselves.

S6: Yes.

CH: Ok. I'm going to have to look for that botanica when I go over there. Do you work with another botanica other than the one you have over there?

S6: The only other one we work with is in the center of Chimaltenango. In St. Andres Iztapa. That is in Guatemala. We also work over there. There is also another spiritual center where the saint we work with is native. St. Simon (San Simon) is the one that I work with.

CH: St. Simon. I have heard of San Andres of Iztapa. Are there any other botanicas here that you are associated with?

S6: No. This one we own.

CH: Does this botanica have a religious orientation?

S6: A religious orientation? To the best of my knowledge, I know that there is a god that creates good and evil. Sometimes as humans we look for evil. God is always dedicated to doing good. But sometimes as mature people, we decide to do what's evil even though we know what is good and evil. Then, in my religious capacity, I am catholic. I go to church a lot. My grandparents and my ancestors have all been Catholic. Then, I have a religion and it's Catholic. That is apart from this and I don't know. Many people say that because one works in this, they can't be religious or have a religion. But I think, that if one does bad, they can't follow God. But if they try to find a way to do good for other people, there is the possibility that one can follow God also.

CH: Yes. That's very understandable because there are also people that don't attend church, but they do have faith and believe in God. Then, they also know the difference between good and evil.

S6: Yes.

CH: So, you don't have any religious assemblies in your botanica?

S6: No.

CH: Are there any religious traditions that aren't used here?

S6: I didn't understand you. Can you ask me that question again?

CH: Yes. For example, the Catholic Church has different prayers. They have a system of tradition in their religion. Your botanica is a spiritual place. It's a place of God and you have established your religious traditions. I would say that it's a mixture of what your ancestors did, what you believe would be beneficial to do today, and influences from your community or something like that. Understand?

Do you have any traditions?

S6: The traditions that I practice are from my great-grandfather and my great-grandmother. They always went to the Catholic Church. Then, my grandmother was always curing things like fright (espanto) and empacho. Like when kids were empachados or frightened. I remember that when she was rubbing them or cleansing them with an egg, she always prayed an 'Our Father' (Padre Nuestro),

'My Lord Jesus Christ' (Señor Mío, Jesucristo), 'Hail Mary' (Ave Maria) and saying these words: In the name of the All Powerful God, I invoke the powerful hand of our Lord Jesus Christ to put His hand over the body of this person. To get rid of all harm or illness that they have, in case it's envy. She also said these and other words, "I am not the one that is curing. It is God that is doing it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then, those are words that always invoke God, but perhaps I learned them from my ancestors. When I was little, I saw that my grandmother cured like this. This stayed with me and at this moment, those are the same words that I repeat when I am performing a cleansing or curing a person. I dedicate this curing to our Lord because He is the one that is going to put His hand. Not one because one is a sinner and cannot cure another person.

CH: Exactly. I understand. It's like, for example, a person that does not attend church, but their parents have taught them how to pray. They always pray in the same manner: "Our father…" Or the manner in which the parents pray.

S6: That's right. Exactly.

CH: How would you say that your botanica is different from the rest?

S6: Well, I think that it's very clear because my clientele are usually people that have problems with being cheated at other botánicas. They went to go get cured or perhaps wanted a medicine or get their cards read or read their palms or the Tarot. They say, "No, they only took my money. On the other hand, I come to this botanica with trust. I didn't know you and I didn't tell you what my problem was and you divined everything that I wanted to know." I think that's what distinguishes it from the rest because the rest only want to get money and not cure the person or even tell the truth.

CH: What percentages of your customers are Latinos, blacks, whites, or Asians?

S6: I have a lot of American customers-blacks and sometimes whites that come to have their cards read, prepare candles perhaps for the future or for good luck, a candle for the Zodiac. Latinos are like 60% with 40% blacks mixed with whites. They look for other botanicas that will read their cards in English and then they come over here because I can read it to them in English.

CH: Ok.

S6: I think that perhaps that is the reason.

CH: It could also be trust like you said. How do attract your clients? Do you have a method for attracting your clients or is it by word of mouth?

S6: My method to bring clients in is that other people send them here. For example, a person comes for the preparation of a medicine or to have a spell (or job) done for better luck in love, a cleansing because as they vulgarly say they can't get a boyfriend. Then, there are results after seven days and they see that they have a better life. So, they tell other people and they come. For example I have customers from San Francisco, New York, Omaha, Nebraska, San Diego. I also have clients from Central America and Mexico. They also call from foreign countries. They don't live here, but simply because some one who lives here told them about a person that can cure, divine the future and this and that. Then, they begin calling from other countries. So, I can also be internationally consulted over the phone.

CH: Ok. Ok, I wanted to ask you about some of the products. For example, for what or how do you use the candles?

S6: For example, there are some that say "fast luck," (suerte rapida) and they are to bring good luck. You prepare it for them. I don't know if you would like a demonstration of how it is prepared.

CH: It would be perfect if you could demonstrate it to me.

S6: Yes. Can you tell that guy if he can bring me a candle, some coins from San Simon and seeds (semillas) to prepare it?

CH: Ok. Ok. Hi. She said if you send her a candle, some coins from San Simon to prepare it.

S6: It doesn't matter. Tell him to bring me a candle (vela) of rose sucker[2] (chupa rosa) as well.

CH: Ok. The battery isn't functioning well. It was supposed to last two hours, but it's only been lasting one hour. But, I have another one with me.

S6: I would like it if you could give me a copy later to see it in my VCR.

CH: Yes. Perfect.

S6: To see how well I explain myself.

CH: You explain very well. I like your personality. Interviewing you. We do the job very quickly.

S6: Ok, lets get started. For example, this candle is from Brother Simon. This candles works for people who are sick. It's a yellow candle. So, you put these three pennies here in gratitude to San Simon for the favor he is going to do through his spirit. You put them here like a triangle. You make a wish per each cent that you put. For example, if I want him to bring me peace, I'm going to ask, "Powerful San Simon, I put this penny here in the name of the Lord so that you can bring peace to my home." On the second one I can ask him for another wish. I can say, "The second one is so that you can help bring me health. That we always have enough food in my home. That food is always bountiful." In the third one, if you want some thing related to love you could say, "I place this third penny, so that you can give me love. Put the right man in my path. That I don't want to suffer any more." One must always do the ritual with a lot of faith and with your eyes closed. Then, this red seed is the symbol of the female and this one the symbol of the male. You put it on the side and the other one over here. These are united when the candle burns. When these are being united as the candle is burning, it's when the person you love or the one you are going to call-if I am preparing it for a person to go crazy wanting to call me, when those seeds are being united…

CH: The person is getting closer.

S6: They are getting close to you. If the seeds don't become united, that means that that person does not want anything to do with you. In a few words, love is already dead. One is doing something impossible. It's like a symbol or demonstration that San Simon gives so that one is not spending more money or perhaps wanting something by force. It's one thing trying to bring him and it's another thing to try to force a person. Ok. After that you

[2] Or hummingbird.

add this oil. This oil contains essence of roble (esencia de roble), essence of pachuli (esencia de pachuli), of 'Come to Me' (de Venga a Mi), oil of money (aceite de dinero). It's a mixture of about twenty-one oils. Then, you add the oil like this and then you tie a paper with your name on it. You tie it with a red ribbon. You tie it like this and then you light it. For example, it's like a candle that I already have prepared there. It's already prepared so he can bring them over. If you want you can bring one over so you can look at it closely.

CH: Ok.

S6: Here, it's already prepared. It contains rue (ruda). It contains everything. It's ready for the person to come pick them up. For example, people call me the day before so that I can prepare them and leave them at the altar. Praying, requesting, invoking San Simon to shed his blessing. At the next day the person comes to pick it up.

CH: Is this what the person asked for?

S6: It's what the person had asked for. Supposedly, you also write the name, last name and date of birth so that by the astrological symbols they call one's spirit to bring him the luck that they want. But it also depends on the person having a lot of faith. If the person does it as a game, then it's something that they are wasting their money on. Then, when I think that a person is doing that I recommend that they don't do that. Instead I tell them, "Look. You are doing this as a prank. For example, maybe you want to see if this works or not. Then, maybe should buy breakfast. It will excite you more, fill your stomach and you won't spend five or ten dollars on a candle." Most people only try to see if it works. "I'm going to try to see if it works," as the saying goes. This is not about seeing if it works. Psychologically, it has to include faith and confidence in you. If you aren't confident about you, you are going to be less confident about your future.

CH: Yes. Like they say, "I fear the mountains."

S6: On the other hand, this other one is a rose sucker (chupa rosa). A rose sucker symbolizes love. The symbol of nectar. The same way as this sparrow[3] (*gorrion*) -you can call him a rose sucker-sucks honey, the person sucks love. This rose sucker sucks your salt. When one is too salty, they don't have luck for love, they don't get a steady job, that maybe they work two or three weeks and then they are fired. Sometimes there is too much envy or they know about the person. Then, this candle has a symbol of the rose sucker, which is a bee. It flies. It is not a prisoner. It goes where it wants. Then, our spirit has to be like that to have peace, tranquility and freedom. This is prepared for love. Here is the symbol where the faces of Adam and Eve are. This is where it says, "For nectar of the flower," or "For love." Then, the prayer is also very curious because it says, "Divine rose sucker, as you suck the salt from the flowers, I want you to suck the salt from me to bring me the love of my life, to keep my enemies far away, to bring luck." All of this forms the base of prayer and sacrifice from one. The day that one is going to use this candle, they should not eat. They have to fast. At least fast twelve hours. If you do not keep the fast then you broke the rules and everything is over. Then the person is like, "They prepared me such thing, but it didn't work," and they start making faces. "It didn't

[3] A gorrion is actually a sparrow, but it seems she is referring to it as a hummingbird.

work for me." They never put a little bit of effort. When one works with spirits, they always ask for a sacrifice from us. If we don't comply with our sacrifice, well, they also won't be accessible to give us what we ask for. Many people that don't do that. They just see that it didn't work. They never think that they didn't make an effort or that they only did it as a joke. If this explanation is good enough, do you want me to explain about someone or something else?

CH: Yes. It's perfect. It's good. It's very good. Then, is that the only way to prepare the candle?

S6: There is another one with a doll. This is very different. For example, this doll is the image of a woman. You can see it here. It has a bust, a vagina. Here it's a little broken, but the doll is not supposed to be broken. She has a vagina and everything that makes up a woman. This is tied like this when people sometimes want these types of jobs. These jobs are no longer good because these jobs are meant to keep people by force. This is when the person is too jealous. They don't want their woman to go anywhere. They want to keep her like this. There are men that want to keep them like this. There are many people in the real world like this. I have gone all the way to El Salvador to cure many people that are like this who have harm placed on them, or curses placed on them. These are harmful. Then, as a curandera, I know what is good and bad. Before all of this, I studied books and all that on how to prepare something to make a person die, how can you put a toad in a person's stomach, how can you make a person menstruate more than usual, how can you inflate a person's stomach and all that. I know it, but I don't practice it. I only cure people that come with this kind of harm. Yes, it is obvious that I have the capacity like that of a doctor. The doctor first studies the illness and then the medicine to know what that medicine cures. Then, they study the illness. Then, they research which medicine will work. So, the doctor always knows the illness and the medicine. The spiritualist (espiritista) is the same. The spiritualist knows the good and the bad. In a few words, when a person is very ill, they know from where and from what they are going to cure that person. For example, this doll symbolizes the body of a human or a woman. Here it is tied so the person is not with another person or man. They tie her vagina and her bust so that person is their true love only for them. When they break these 'patas' (a common way of saying feet), it means-excuse me you don't say 'patas,' you say 'pies' (feet).

CH: 'Pies.'

S6: When you break the feet right here, it is done so the person won't leave the house. I don't know if you have seen that before or often, those women often seem sunken. In a few vulgar words, they are dumb. They don't wise up. They don't fix themselves up. They don't comb their hair. They are only at home. Those people have this harm done to them. They are not like that just because. I don't believe that any human being could-

CH: Just be like that on their own.

S6: Like that just because. They can't be like that simply because there is will power. Now I will move on to what is next. I have another job here. This job is what we were talking about before. It's like a bad spell. It's what those people who do bad things do. This is a black man. It's a doll made to look like a man. He has cemetery dirt. It has destructor oil (aceite destructoro). As you can see, he has a black string that has him tied

from his to his feet. He has pictures and hair of the person. I do not practice this. I simply prepared this to explain to you how these jobs are done by people who work diabolically, with Santeria or with Voodoo. If I am telling you this it is to explain the difference between the people that do bad and those who do good. I prepared this yesterday to give you a more adequate example so that you can see how this is done. Now, this doll is tied from head to toes. He has needles. He has string, a photograph, the name and hair of the person. This means that the inflicted person will suffer a lot of headaches, he will have bad luck at work, he won't have sexual relations. With this spell, he will die in forty-five days. The person does not last long with this kind of harm that I am telling you of. A lot of people come from any country that has that kind of harmful spells. One day farther ahead, I would like you to see someone being cured as I pull needles or other harmful things from that person. That looks very curious because many people say, "That doesn't exist. That's foolishness. Those are tricks that the person does to get more clients. Or they are tricks to swindle the person." Unfortunately, it does exist because it's even in the Bible. There exists harm and good. Bad and good. Then, these people do these jobs more than good healing. I am from El Salvador and there are a lot of places where a lot of people make pacts with the devil, pacts with Lucifer. It ends up being with the same devil, but the pact has different conditions. These people are dedicated to harming others. These people don't charge five or twenty dollars. They charge from two thousand to three thousand dollars, pesos, or whatever currency in their land. This harm is inflicted when perhaps you have a very aggressive enemy and you can't dominate him. You can't go up to him and tell him, "What do you want?" and all. They go to these spiritualists that are found in black centers (centros negros). These black centers simply exist to do evil. If they say black center, you know that the word of God does not exist there. No angels exist there. There doesn't exist any saint or anything. There only exist skulls, diabolical images, things of terror where all human beings are manipulated. If you want to harm someone, you have to give something in return from a loved one. It could be your son, your mother, or your most loved one for you to destroy another person. I think that those people have sick brains or heads, because I say if I'm going to harm someone-you have to leave things to God because we are no one to take justice into our own hands. Unfortunately, not everyone thinks the way that I do. Many people think that because jealousy or whatever, they destroy other people without fear of God. Did you understand this now?

CH: Yes.

S6: Good.

CH: A lot of it.

S6: Well, let's move on to what's next. Let's look at another question.

CH: Are necklaces or chains used?

S6: Yes. There are necklaces that come with image of San Simon and others with the Virgin of Guadalupe (Virgen de Guadalupe). Others come with the image of a guardian angel (angel de la guarda), or St. Judas Tadeo (San Judas Tadeo). Lots of people are devoted to any saint or different images. That is why a store has to have everything for the person or people. Also to include whatever their likes are.

CH: What are the necklaces used for?

S6: The necklace serves as a symbol of an amulet, of protection. Sometimes you want to protect yourself from something bad. If you have faith in St. Judas Tadeo, you are going to say to him, "Little St. Judas, I want you to keep me away from such a person. I want you to help me find a job," even if St. Judas is more dedicated to finding unemployed people jobs. Then that's why it serves as an amulet for the person.

CH: Ok. Every saint, or the Virgin, or Jesus, each has-

S6: Each one demonstrates their character or specialty.

CH: Ok. Are there herbal paints (pinturas de hierbas)?

S6: Yes, there are herbal paints of many kinds. For example, there's Chinese tint (tinta china) that is an herb that they use-I don't know if you necessarily have to apply it-but the people who have weak male membranes use it a lot. It's for good erections.

CH: Like Viagra?

S6: Almost like Viagra, but it's like a Chinese tint that is applied to the membrane when it's erect or up. Then you apply it around the head of the penis so that there's a good ejaculation when he's making love to the other person.

CH: Wow.

S6: They are herbs that are brought from the Amazon, China, and India. They make these tints. Sometimes these aren't always recommended because you always need a medical prescription. That's why people sometimes don't use it. One knows the effect that it could have.

CH: Ok. Are there herbal soaps? Or perfumes?

S6: Yes. There are soaps made of rue (ruda), aloe (sabila). The one made of sabila is used for cleansing (limpia). The one for rue is used for stripping (despojo). The one of 'John the Conqueror' ('Juan Conquistador') is used to conquer love. The one of rose sucker (chupa rosa) is used for love or work. The 'Buddha' one is also used to have trade and business. There is an infinite amount of soaps, which I would not be able to list them all, but each one has a distinct purpose.

CH: Would it be like the candles?
S6: It would almost be like the candles, but they are used differently. You use the soap to wash the most adequate body parts. For example, if it is for love you are not going to wash your face. You are not going to wash your face or your hair. You are simply going to wash your bust, the butt or the vagina, clamoring for love to come. When it comes to your work, you're going to do your whole body and you are going to say, "With this soap I shed all bad luck, envy over me, and I want to get a good job." You give thanks to God and you pray three 'Our Father's to God and three 'Hail Mary's to the Virgin Mary.

CH: Ok. Oils.

S6: There is an infinite amount of oils, which are 'John the Conqueror' ('Juan Conquistador'), 'Come to me' attractor ('Ven a Mi' atrayente), 'Reversible' ('Reversible'), which is used to return evil. There is also St. Alejo, St. Juda, and St. Simon. There are many types of oils and they all work at the time interval for what you need it for. Since there are a lot of people who have different saints or different images that they use to do things, the store has to have all kinds of images and oils. For example, I am very devoted to Brother Simon. Therefore, I only use Brother Simon's products. I never use another image's. Then, that's what other people are like. When you have a saint, you are going to find his [products]. You know that the red one is for love. The yellow one is for health. The white envy. The black is used to return evil. Then, there are many colors in which one can choose from to do what they want or what they need.

CH: Statues or images?

S6: There are images of everything. We have the Virgin of Guadalupe, Brother Simon, Jesus Christ, Malverde, St. Judas, and St. Lazarus. They use all of the images. For example, people that are beyond recovery (desahuciado) use St. Lazaro. Excuse me, I don't know how you say that word, but they don't have a cure.

CH: Aha.

S6: Those people use it when they don't have a cure. For example, they have wounds. They can't walk. They use the image of St. Lazarus a lot because that is him to cure them in a good future. St. Simon is generally used for health, love, keep enemies away, bring good luck, for business. Even though lately-it hurts me a lot because I am very devoted to St. Simon since the age of five or seven when I began reading palms, cards and all that, I worked with St. Simon-a lot of people in this area advertise St. Simon or have his image, they only use it to get clients' attention, but they don't work with him. There are a lot of botanicas that are called 'St. Simon' and sometimes the only ones that work with him do it incorrectly one third of the time. They criticize us. Perhaps they just use the saint to cheat people. That really hurts me because I really love my St. Simon. He is like our salvation in everything that we do. Then, it hurts us when others just use him to attract clients.

CH: I have noticed that St. Simon is very popular in botanicas. There are people that sometimes just have his image even if they don't work with him. They have him there. They give him his bread and water, but they don't work with him. They simply have things of St. Simon because the community demands it.

S6: Exactly.

CH: Because there are a lot of Guatemalans and Central Americans in this area who have much faith in St. Simon. That is interesting. Are there any other products that are beneficial and I just haven't asked you? From the questions you have?

S6: There is a lot. For example, there are powders (polvos) that are used to attract clients, for protection, for cleansing. There are baths (baños). There are an infinite amount of

products and a one hundred percent of it comes from Central America. There are many products in this business. There is incense. There is incense for church (incensio de iglesia), of Pachuli, of the seven potents (siete potencia), of 'Come to Me' (Ven a Mi), and of cinnamon (canela). It would take too long for me to explain each incense and everything that they do. However, do you want to count them?

CH: I was going to ask you if there is any general method to using incense? For example, are they used in cleansings (limpias) or in other-

S6: They are used in cleansings. They are also used for protection at home. They use it as an aromatic. For example, when you want to have a nice relationship with your husband, light cinnamon or pachuli incense. It gives more passion. The fumes serve as an aphrodisiac to love each other more. That's why I'm telling that there's a lot to explain. Each one has its purpose and they are used differently. For example, at home, at the business, when you got to the park, wherever. Sometimes they are even good to get rid of mosquitoes (zancudos). It's the most essential that it can do.

CH: They can be practical and spiritual.

S6: One can use it for what you need. Its use is very practical.

CH: Ok. Which of the following services do you offer here: ceremonies, spiritual advice, family advice, or personal advice, health recommendations?

S6: Yes. Look, these are services that we have are the following. For example: first, people come and want to know about their private life or the life of their husband and that is why you read the Tarot. You read the Tarot to divine the future. That's a service. Then, you can get your palm read and a cleansing. Sometimes spiritual rituals are made when you want to shed harm that has been done to you. That means what I explained to you before about removing a needle or something like that in a ritual, but all spiritually. Also, there are times when I am more of a psychologist than a witch, as people vulgarly say that one is a witch. Being a witch is one thing and a spiritual is another, reading is another thing, and everything. People say in plural, "No, she's a witch."

Well, that's generally, but each name has its derivative. For example, a person might come in and sometimes I feel that I play the role of a psychologist more. Sometimes people that have marriage problems come. Sometimes because of gossip, another person that is envious and says, "No, I saw your husband in such and such a place. Your husband this." They are destroying a marriage that is possibly happy. They come here and tell me, "Look, ma'am. I have problems with this and that. I think that my husband is with another woman." Then, I ask her, "How do you treat your husband?" That's the first question. "How do you keep him?" "Well, he comes home. I wait for him with this long face. I swear at him, and this and that. Where's he been?" "That's not a way to wait for your husband. Instead of waiting for him like that, look, fix yourself. Take a bath. Put make-up on your mouth. Use a lip liner. Use a scented lotion. Wait for him with sexier clothing. Have his food on the table. Use candles for decoration. The man will like being with you, but if he finds you all disheveled, a fat slob, bad tempered, in the end, you send him to another woman's arms. It's not that she's taking him away from you with witchcraft as you are telling me. It's simple: you are losing your husband because you do

not know how to be a woman or a wife at home. You have to practice what I am telling you and you'll see that everything will be alright." She leaves very happy. In a week, she's back with, "Look, miss, it was true. See, now that I fix myself more, I use make-up and I make myself more beautiful, as soon as he comes, home he touches my butt. He touches my leg and we are passionate in bed." "You see that is wasn't a spell?"

But if I was a bad person, or one of those frauds, I could have taken advantage of her problem. I could have told her, "Oh, no, they are taking your husband away. They are using a spell on you. Come, pay so much money and I will cure you." That's injustice because that is a sin before God. If a person does not have a curse (daño) cast on them, why am I going to tell them that they've had witchcraft done on them? There are many botánicas around here that do that. They cheat people. Sometimes there are personal problems, physical problems or hygiene problems and people don't know what to do. There is no one to tell them. Then, these people destroy their own homes.

Here is another example: there are other people that sometimes, in between family, they become enemies. It's between siblings, brother/sister(s)-in-law, father/mother(s)-in-law. That is one of the most common problems: the mother-in-law does not get along with the daughter-in-law. They swear at each other. They throw rocks at each other[4]. Everything. It is because of that my grandmother said, "The good mother-in-law makes the good daughter-in-law. And the good daughter-in-law makes the good mother-in-law." They come in here, "No, I think that my mother-in-law is lighting candles of separation (velas de separacion). My mother-in-law has me cursed so that I will separate from my husband because she does not want to see me with her son." Maybe what's missing is verbal communication. They simply listen to people's gossip. If they take a seat and see that the mother-in-law is bad tempered and begins to treat her badly, what she can do is go for a walk and leave. Later, it will go away and she will look for her herself to say, "Please me excuse me. I was in a bad mood and I started to treat you bad. It wasn't your fault." If she doesn't, then they beat each other up. Then, they end up cursing each other and they end up at these centers of witchcraft, where they only destroy homes or families. In all of this, I serve as a spiritual advisor and sometimes as a psychologist because many marriages are in crisis. They are not spiritual or witchcraft problems. They are simply emotional problems that they don't know how to deal with between themselves.

CH: Very good. Ok. I wanted to ask you a bit about yourself, but let me see if this- (Inaudible, must be checking tape recorder). We're still all right. Since we were talking about you, I wanted to ask you a little about yourself from our conversation. You said that you started practicing with St. Simon from the age of seven. Could you tell me a little more about when you knew that you had a special ability to communicate with St. Simon?

S6: Yes. Right now.
CH: Or you if your grandmother taught you?

S6: Right now. Since my great-(great?) grandmother-she was my great grandmother because she was the mother of my great grandmother. So, it comes from a very long time. This lady was named Rosita. She was a very famous curandera in the center of Isalco,

[4] I don't know if this is a literal phrase or not.

about a hundred or a hundred twenty years ago. My grandmother and my great grandmother-now I only have my grandmother. My grandmother and my great grandmother died already[5]. She was always a good curandera and she cured with St. Simon. When I was five years old, I grew up with my great grandmother because I did get to meet her. I got to meet her more than the mother of my great grandmother. I didn't know her. I didn't meet my great-(great?)-grandmother because she was too old. When I was six or seven years old, she was like sixty years old. She was very old.

Guy: There is a woman outside waiting for you. She said that if you had space. Do know if you are you going to last long?

S6: I'm going to last like another half hour.

G: Yes? Ok.

S6: It's because I'm compromised with this interview.

G: Yes. I will tell her.

S6: You see? The clients are waiting outside.

CH: Yes.

S6: A place that does good things, fills up like that, even if I'm up at seven until twelve. (Inaudible). Well, yes, there are clients already waiting outside.

CH: Yes. Do you want to attend to her? I can turn this off, too.

S6: No, it's better that we continue. I like to be direct with what I say.

CH: Ok. Thank you.

S6: So, on today's subject. I forgot what we were talking about. I-

CH: We were talking about you. You were telling me about-

S6: Yes. So, when I was like five, my great grandmother was like sixty years old. So, I was with her. She always took care of me. She spoiled me a lot. So, when she was in a consultation, I stood between her legs to see when she read the cards. Then, it was kind of like practice for me from a very young age. So, when I had like seven or twelve years old, I went to school in the first grade. From there, I read my classmates' hands. Maybe I read their naipe that they used to play poca with. I read their poca. I told the girls their future and all that. Later, they were all afraid of me when I was twelve because they said, "No, I don't want you to tell me anything because it's all true." I remember that once, when I was seven, I told a little boy, "Don't go to the river because there is something dangerous there for you. There is danger from death. I see death in your face," I told him.

[5] This is all confusing. She is trying to differentiate between the mother of her grandmother and the grandmother of her grandmother.

He said, “You are crazy.” He went and drowned right in the river. From there, all the other children feared me. It was how I got practice and all. To summarize, I practiced working spiritually-I think that-since I was in my mother’s womb because at that time, she was also a curandera. So, I was in her womb, when she was cleansing and curing. I put it to practice at a very young age. I don’t know if you want a more explanatory response. Or is that enough?

CH: That’s enough. It’s like an inheritance. That is your genetic inheritance. I want to see. So, this has been a part of you all of your life. Here, then, how long have you lived here in Los Angeles?

S6: I’m going up to eleven years here.

CH: Eleven years. Have you had your botanica since you came? Was your botanica like the one over there?

S6: No. When I got here, I began curing from a closet in my apartment. I began to learn how to read and smoke cigars (puros) and to cure, but in a closet in an apartment of mine. Later, I was able to rent a small location and then a larger one. I have been improving until now.

CH: Ok. In El Salvador, because that is where you grew up, right?

S6: Mh-h.

CH: When you lived there, did you have a place over there?

S6: Yes. I did have a place over there and to this moment, I still do. In that location, I still have the place. It was a very small place when I was there because at that time I was sixteen. Then, I came over here. Now here on, with everything that I have been able to make here, I was able to create a bigger place. The one in El Salvador is now a bigger place.

CH: In Isalco?

S6: In Isalco.

CH: So, according to what you explained to me, you can divine people’s physical, emotional, and spiritual problems?

S6: Yes. For example, when a person comes, I already have more or less of an idea of what problem they have by looking at their gaze. I know when there are problems with love, when it is unrequited, when the person is suffers from jealousy, or perhaps when the person actually has a curse. Or if not I can divine from their Tarot. In a few words, sometimes one makes use of the Tarot for them to pay for the consultation because I can’t just tell the person about their problems. I have rent to pay. I have to pay eight hundred dollars for the rent here. I support my family. So, I can’t be divining a person’s future out there. They have to come in here for them pay the twenty dollars of the consultation. It sounds bad, but that is what I live off of.

CH: No. Sometimes need to see you do something to believe that you are doing something.

S6: Exactly. It's like a medical consultation. I can see a person's eyes and tell them, "You have this problem. You are suffering." In a few words, spiritually, I need to be at the table to divine that future for a consultation, even if I knew it outside.

CH: I wanted to ask you if you were with other masters or curanderos?

S6: No, it's something that I inherited at a very young age and I would not like to share it with other people, except only with my family.

CH: And-

S6: It sounds very selfish. Forgive me. Not sharing with other sounds very selfish, but sometimes people don't know the significance or don't appreciate it. So, I wouldn't like to waste my time with someone who would later laugh about what I'm telling or explaining to them.

CH: There is also envy.

S6: Mh-h. What I said sounded awful and I beg your forgiveness, but sometimes it's not selfishness, it's just that if you know something, other people will criticize it. To prevent problems, do it with a family member because he will not laugh at you. If they don't understand, you explain it a second time.

CH: It's personal care because other people tell me the same in any work that does the same as you. So, were you born in Isalco?

S6: I was born in the province of Sonsonate that is a part of Isalco.

CH: Isalco was one of my favorite towns that I saw the last time that I was in El Salvador.

S6: That is where they still speak the Nawa or Pipil dialects[6]. That's where they still speak it, not a lot, but there are still people that do.
CH: Yes. I want to see. Ok. I think that that's all for today. Maybe next time I will be able to ask you more about St. Simon.

S6: Yes.

CH: And other little things.

S6: Since St. Simon can cure anything. It's a time when people doubt and I prove it to them with acts. For example, spiritually, I operate from here to other countries. Where the person has damage done to them-like I explained about the frogs and snakes that they

[6] Unsure if they are both the same or different.

have in their stomachs-by other people. Brother Simon does the operation from here. I never say that I am the one that operates. He is simply the one that does it. You just tell the person to dress in white, to place a fork, a knife, two glasses, one with water and one with liquor (which is the wine that Brother Simon drinks) and to lie here on the floor (on the dirt). To place three of these little white flags around them as if the person was dead. You put them like this in the form of a triangle. The next day the person is healed and has stitches were Brother Simon placed the serum. Stitches on the butt, where he's been injected with anesthesia. He's like a patient that has just come out of an operation. Many people do not believe it, but I like to prove it to them with acts so they can see that there are no lies coming from me.

CH: Ok.

S6: Maybe later I can give you an explanation of all of this if we again have the opportunity to speak.

CH: Yes. I would like to and if it's possible, when you are not working, as to not take time away from your work. Maybe we can be a little more at peace.

S6: Maybe it can be on a Sunday.

CH: Yes.

S6: As you can see there is a lot of…

CH: Yes, yes. I understand. Meanwhile-

S6: I hope that are satisfied with what we've talked about and if it's any good for your studies, I hope that you get a good grade.

CH: Thank you, thank you. I will bring you a copy of this video so that you can see it.

S6: Ok.

(End of Interview).